

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 5: General Case Management	Effective Date: May 1, 2008
	Section 3: Engaging the Family	Version: 1

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will build trust-based relationships with families and other partners by exhibiting empathy, professionalism, genuineness, and respect.

DCS will encourage the parent/guardian/custodian to utilize the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting as the primary means for assessment of the individual strengths and needs of the child and family in determining case/service planning, and explain the benefits of utilizing this process. See Related Information. See separate policies, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#) and [5.8 Developing the Case Plan](#).

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will communicate to family members that active participation is wanted, needed, and valued in all aspects of the case as members of the CFT. DCS will, to the extent possible, engage both maternal and paternal family members equally in the assessment and case planning process from the first point of intervention.

DCS will demonstrate sensitivity and empathy to the crisis and emotions that family members may be experiencing, especially if they are separated from their child(ren).

DCS staff will strive to identify and value the cultural context in which the family operates. See Related Information for further details.

Code References

1. N/A

PROCEDURE

The FCM will¹:

1. Utilize CFT meetings, if applicable, to encourage participation;
2. Clearly communicate DCS expectations to the parent/guardian/custodian, to:
 - a. Actively participate in (CFT) Meetings;
 - b. Keep appointments;
 - c. Make every effort to involve the parent/guardian/custodian in recommended services; and
 - d. Communicate openly and honestly.

¹ Illinois Best Practices Manual, 8.5.5, Engagement of the Kinship Network,
<http://dcfswebresource.prairienet.org/bp/kinship/placement-04.php>

3. Communicate updates regarding all aspects of the case in a timely manner to the Court, CFT, parents, and service providers;
4. Recognize that family members may be new participants in the child welfare and juvenile court system. Take the time to explain how these systems work and answer any questions asked by the family. Ensure the family understands that events can occur at certain timelines during the life of the case, (i.e., filing of termination petition at 15 months of child being in substitute care);
5. Respect the pace at which the family moves. Intervention is a traumatic time and the family may need time to process what is happening. Don't rush discussion and be sure to convey the importance of each and every contact;
6. Recognize the value of the family members and value their expertise on the family history; and
7. Assess family strengths, then engage the CFT or case plan conference to determine how these strengths can be used to provide for the child's safety and well-being;

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1. N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

Engagement

Engagement between a child, family, and case manager is the first step in creating invested relationships and assessing family strengths and underlying needs. When families are engaged in collaborative decision making and case planning, they understand their roles and are more empowered and motivated to make the long-lasting changes necessary to protect the children in their care. Engaging is the skill of effectively establishing a relationship with children, parents, and essential individuals for the purpose of sustaining the work that is to be accomplished together.

Benefits of the CFT process to the child(ren) and family

When the FCM finds it necessary to encourage the family to utilize the CFT meeting process, the following benefits of the CFT process can be shared:

1. Reduces the need for substitute care;
2. Increases the use of relative care;
3. Increases placement options in the child's own community;
4. Reduces the need for of institutional and group home care;
5. Reduced number of placement moves and disruptions;
6. Increased sibling placements;
7. Reduced court involvement;
8. Reduced length of out of home care;
9. Increased reunification and permanency rate;
10. Increased child and family visits;

11. Reduced incidence of repeat maltreatment;
12. Better outcomes for children;
13. Empowers parents which results in lasting change;
14. Better follow-through with services because parents make more decisions;
15. Validates the strengths of parents - Workers, service providers and family members identify and discuss the strengths of the family;
16. Builds and improves important relationships and informal supports that continue long after DCS involvement;
17. Shared Responsibility – Family members and workers come together to make important decisions;
18. Concerns and Issues are Discussed – Workers discover that family members are often concerned about the same issues that workers are concerned about;
19. Family Specific Service Plans – CFT Meetings provide opportunities to develop service plans that are specific to the needs of the child and family; and
20. Establishes Hope – That families are willing to care for their own.

Cultural Competence & Family-Centered Practice

In family-centered practice, the child welfare agency and its staff strive to be culturally competent and ensure that services provided to children and families are respectful of and compatible with their cultural strengths and needs. Culturally competent agencies and practitioners are able to view a family's strengths and needs within a cultural context and integrate culturally relevant information in helping the family develop a meaningful plan of action. Cultural competence is a skill learned by the individual and the organization, fostered by a commitment to provide services that are culturally appropriate and that make a positive difference for children and families.

The culturally competent worker is guided by the following principles:

1. Respect for the client's home and family is of utmost concern;
2. Local etiquette should prevail in the worker's behavior as he/she enters the family's environment;
3. Careful work in establishing the role of the worker as a partner in helping is essential to establishing trust; and
4. The family remains in charge of their own lives while the worker motivates, facilitates, and creates a climate of respect and caring.²

Becoming culturally competent is considered a lifelong process that requires continual study and effort.

² <http://www.childwelfare.gov/supporting/cultural.cfm#one#one>